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A WEB OF THOUGHTS

A WEB OF THOUGHTS

BY

MARJORIE ANDERSON

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To My Mother and Father

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A WEB OF THOUGHTS

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I sit within the tower room
Of my gray-walled Shalott,
And weave amidst the magic gloom
My web of thoughts, upon a loom
Of memories half forgot.

At times the thoughts are passing keen
Like goodly errant knights,
And then anon they lose their sheen,
And hang, a tangled, misty screen,
Like a spider web o' nights.

Here comes in cap and bells of yore
A merry, freakish thought,
And now dull murmurings o'er and o'er,
Waves lapping on a lonely shore,
With wistful sadness fraught.

And thoughts there are like chimes that peal
From some cathedral spire,
So far aloof; while others feel
Like burning coals that half reveal
The secrets of the fire.

And so I sit within the room
In my gray-towered Shalott,
And weave amidst its magic gloom
A web of thoughts, upon a loom
Of memories half forgot.

THREE FRIENDS

One friend I have who is to me
  A shining highway broad,
Which stretches forward evenly,
  Up to the throne of God.

Another friend is like the fire,
  Whose warm and merry flame
Leaps ever upward, high and higher,
  Changing and yet the same.

But you are like the wind which sweeps
  The cloudy mists away.
You breathe upon my soul that sleeps,
  And waken it to day.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

Our house is filled with friendly souls
  Who haunt its many rooms,
And linger like the fragrance born
  In delicate perfumes.

One spirit is a dreamer, old
  With never-ending youth,
Who listens to the harmonies
  We weave in search of truth.

Another is a red-cheeked dame
  With kindly, genial face,
Who from her fireside corner, shares
  Our daily commonplace.

Sometimes the spirits change. I know
  The lady, pink and gold,
With silken gown and formal smile
  Who ruled one room of old,

Has vanished quite, and in her place,
  A lad in student guise
Lives with the past, the glowing love
  Of wisdom in his eyes.

These spirits live; but oh! the rooms
  Whose closed doors once stood wide!
Their souls have flown away, and I—
  I fain would stand outside.

"YOU'RE LIKE A STRAIN OF MUSIC"

You're like a strain of music in my heart,
Sometimes a plaintive measure, hushed and slow,
Then filled with fiery notes that throb and glow;
But oftenest you're just a gypsy air,
That, wandering aimless, haunts me everywhere.

SOAPBUBBLES

Castles in the air!
  Watch them as they grow!
Rainbow-hued they stand
  Proof 'gainst any foe.

Castles in the air!
  Whither have they flown?
Only I am left
  Blowing bubbles all alone.

THE THREE TREES

Three trees stood on a lonely heath,
  Outlined against the sky;
The wind swept through them ceaselessly
  With plaintive, whispered sigh.

With dragging steps, a traveler sought
  Beneath their shade to rest;
His dusty garments, sorely stained,
  Plainly his plight confessed.

And as, exhausted, fast he slept,
  Lulled by the fleeting breeze,
He heard three voices faint and far,
  The voices of the trees.

"Upon my boughs," the first one said,
  "Full many a year ago,
A man was hanged." A shudder shook
  The sleeper down below.

The second sighed, "Within my trunk
  Is hid a lady fair,
Who at his death changed to a nymph,
  His resting place to share."

The third voice laughed, "No mournful tale
  Of death or love have I,
But 'neath my roots the gold he brought
  Deep buried still does lie."

The sleeper wakened with a start,
And peered to left and right;
Upon the lifeless, empty heath
No creature was in sight.

The trees like silent watchmen stood,
One tall and gaunt and dread,
Another drooping, frail, the third
With sturdy boughs low-spread.

Upon the last he stared in thought,
Then dug with feverish haste,
Until he found the treasure-box
The dead man there had placed.

Then quickly and with buoyant step
He started on his way.
"He has left love behind him," soft
The second tree did say.

"He has escaped my ruthless doom
For this time," warned the first.
"He did not hear," the third tree scoffed,
"How the treasure has been cursed."

A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY LYRIC

I heard a bird a-caroling,
Perched high upon a tree;
His notes like merry chimes did ring,
And scatter melody.
Yet though he filled the air with trills,
My pulses did not start;
But when fair Cynthia sings, it thrills
My very heart.

If I might hear the angels' song
Within the heavenly gate,
I know my soul would find it long
And wearisome to wait,
Until I heard sweet Cynthia's voice
In that celestial choir.
Ah! then my spirit would rejoice
With quickening fire.

THE HIGHROAD

(A Lyric)

Winding up and winding down
On a misty April morning,
Like a queen in silver gown,
Dewdrops bright her hair adorning;
Winding down and winding up,
Summer madness comes soon after,
Like a gypsy now, her cup
Filled with laughter.

WHEN CHOPIN PLAYED

When Chopin played amidst the gloom
Of some dim, candle-lighted room,
Then men were moved beneath the spell
Of golden notes that rose and fell,
To dream of southern isles in bloom,
And gardens full of soft perfume,
Or moonbeams on some knight's carved tomb,
Or raindrops in a sheltered dell,
When Chopin played.

But soon the dreams have met their doom,
The pattern changes on the loom,
For every cavalier and belle
Now hears the magic waltzes swell.
Ah! who could flirt with fan or plume
When Chopin played?

FOUR SCENES FROM SCHUMANN'S "CARNAVAL"

I

Pierrot

On quaint and deftly pointed toes,
With noiseless step he comes and goes,
As if with velvet he were shod,
Or on some dew-drenched lawn had trod.
His white face like a staring clock
Is witless, but the red lips mock
In silence, till with a laughing jeer,
He's fled to the moonlight, ghostly and clear.

II

Harlequin

Is Harlequin
A sprite? The maddest of them all
Is Harlequin.
His tireless feet in circles spin,
Casting weird shadows on the wall.
Whirlwind in motley at the ball
Is Harlequin.

III

The Coquette

With a flirt of her fan
And a gay pirouette
Her attack she began,
With a flirt of her fan.
Away she then ran,
Every inch a coquette,
With a flirt of her fan
And a gay pirouette.

IV

Pantaloon and Columbine

Pantaloon and Columbine
Softly on their tiptoes meeting,
Dainty measures intertwine
With a hasty whispered greeting.
In pursuit away they're fleeting,
Like two bits of gay festoon,
She disdaining, he entreating,
Columbine and Pantaloon.

A DRESDEN SHEPHERDESS

A little Dresden shepherdess,
With gleaming, powdered hair,
And dazzling smile, I must confess
She seemed a thing so rare,
Incarnate youth and happiness,
I bought her with a song.—
A song may be a brief caress,
But smiles last long—too long.

THE THREE WOODCUTTERS

(A translation of a French folk-song)

There were three woodcutters on the green,
(Hark, hark to the nightingale!)
There were three woodcutters on the green,
Who talked to a maid, the village queen,
Oh, the nightingale is singing!

The youngest said, (he held a rose)
(Hark, hark to the nightingale!)
The youngest said, who held the rose,
"I love, but I dare not my love disclose."
Oh, the nightingale is singing!

The oldest cried, with an axe in his hand,
(Hark, hark to the nightingale!)
The oldest cried, with an axe in his hand,
"Wherever I love, there I shall command."
Oh, the nightingale is singing!

The third sang, bearing a flower blue,
(Hark, hark to the nightingale!)
The third sang, bearing his flower blue,
"I love, for your love in return I sue."
Oh, the nightingale is singing!

"My friend you are not, you who carry the rose,"
(Hark, hark to the nightingale!)
"My friend you are not, you who carry the rose,
If you dare not, I dare not love disclose."
Oh, the nightingale is singing!

"My master you are not, with the axe in your hand,"
(Hark, hark to the nightingale!)
"My master you are not, with the axe in your hand,
For true love can never come at command."
Oh, the nightingale is singing!

"My love you shall be, with your flower blue,"
(Hark, hark to the nightingale!)
"My love you shall be, with your flower blue,
For all is given to those who sue."
Oh, the nightingale is singing!

COROT'S "DANCE OF THE NYMPHS"

Under the trees all misty and grey in the haze of the morning,
Lords of the forest with ivy-twined trunks, and silvery birches,
In and out gayly flutter the dancers, all secrecy scorning,
Light-hearted nymphs of the woodland, by mortal unseen if he searches
Boldly, but sometimes revealed to the poet who watches enraptured;
Hand in hand they encircle a satyr from slumber half-risen,
Roused from his dreams of elysian freedom to find himself captured
Fast in a net of shimmering beauty, a scintillant prison.

NAMES

Like the hilt of a sword richly jewelled, whose sheen
Makes the blade seem the straighter, the sword-hand
more keen;
Like a binding of vellum, old, priceless, renowned,
'Twixt whose covers the soul of a saint may be found;
Like the sign of an inn with its message of cheer,
Or the door to a passage of darkness and fear,
Like the blare of a trumpet, an ivory frame—
Is the magical power concealed in a name.

MASKS

Within a treasure-house whose marble halls
Are heaped with riches gleaned from years gone by,
Amid its glowing, beauty-laden walls,
A group of Grecian masks arrests the eye.
Behind that staring face, did men once hear
The weeping of Antigone, the rage
Of Oedipus? Did they applaud the leer
Of these weird gargoyles of a classic age?
To us who love to see the changing moods
Reflected in a face, it seems unreal;
But still behind stage-laughter often broods
A troubled spirit, grief that will not heal.
Perchance the Greeks were after all more kind;
We have no friendly masks to hide behind.

MIRACLES

I listen to God's voice among the trees,
Mid whose arched boughs the sunbeams intertwine,
The birds pour forth their worship half divine,
Then take to flight upon the summer breeze.
Above my head, like drone of countless bees,
A birdman soars; in yon cathedral shrine
With myriad colors soft the sun's rays shine,
The organ peals forth golden harmonies.

The wonders of God's world not made with hands
Man cannot reach, but he was given the power
Of moulding beauty, and his handwork stands,
God's seal upon it. In the creator's hour
He follows humbly where his Master trod;
Man's miracles are also works of God.

TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Last night I watched the heaven's starry flight,
Saw Jupiter with golden face serene,
The rings of Saturn girdling him with light,
The dazzling brilliance of proud Beauty's queen.
And as I gazed my wonder grew apace,
That such vast power was given to mortal man,
To bring down truth from out the boundless space,
And bridge the heavens with her mighty span.

And yet I find more beauty in a sky
Whose gloomy depths, unfathomed, are aflame
With gleaming jewels of light, that shine on high
Like flashing diamonds in an ebon frame.
Grave truth has breathed her secrets in our ears,
But must we lose the music of the spheres?

IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY

Within its welcoming portals, open wide
To all, they come and go, a motley throng,
Some seeking wisdom, others with the strong
And beckoning hand of fancy as their guide.
'Tis fancy leads them where the bluebirds hide
And fill the heavens with happy-throated song,
Or where the pounding hoof-beats fly along
Some winding western trail which cowboys ride.
She gives to each the keys of old romance,
Which open doors their longing souls have missed,
Shut in by darkened walls of circumstance;
Beneath her sway they loose the baffling twist
Of hidden crime, or seize life's winning chance,
Fond lovers whom her magic lips have kissed.

THE THINKER AND THE SINGER

A master of man's thought, he wields a pen
So Titan-like in power, one hears the peal
Of Thor's bold thunder, or the clash of steel
When sword meets sword amongst earth's supermen.
A singer of man's songs, in him again
Apollo treads the earth; we humbly kneel
Before the beauty that his words reveal,
A melody from worlds beyond our ken.

The thinkers and the singers of this world,
Both richly gifted with a power divine,
Too often have their banners wide unfurled
In hostile camps, paid homage to one shrine
Alone. Would that more often we might see
Thor's strength linked with Apollo's melody!

A fisherman! And you were living when
Herod ruled in Galilee? Ah! then
You surely must have seen Christ walk
Among the fields, and heard Him talk
Beside the lake. Perhaps 'twas you He healed.
Or were you one of those who kneeled
To kiss His garment as He passed along,
So calm amidst the adoring throng?
Tell us who live so far in time and place,
How felt you when you saw Him face to face?

You're silent and your head is bowed.
Too sacred is it to be said aloud?
Forgive the violation of a shrine
On which is laid a memory divine.
But no, you start at last to speak!
You say you're not the man whom we would seek!
And why? Because when Christ was preaching there
In your small town, you had no time to spare
From mending nets that day, no time to run
After some strolling preacher, none
To waste with idle crowds. And so
You missed the Son of Man. How could you know,
As on the ground you gazed, that in the sky
The glory of the stars was passing by?

LIVING PORTRAITS

A room of portraits old and rare,
With silent lips and painted stare,
Oppresses you? Then let me show
You living portraits just as fair.

That woman with the thoughtful eyes,
Serene, wide-open, and all-wise,
Her oval face tinged with faint glow,
Is some madonna from the skies.

And yonder man with sidelong glance,
Where imps of laughter lurk and dance,
Is but the "Laughing Cavalier,"
That dashing knight of old romance.

And here's a nymph for Fragonard,
As dainty as spring flowers are;
And there's a classic face, severe,
A flawless mask, without a scar.

Many others I could add,
Yet looking at them makes me sad.
Live works of art! but did you see
What stained and tarnished frames they had?

TRAVELS

I was weary of known places,
Sights so old they seemed akin
To the fragile, dainty laces
Which they used to weave and spin,
Lying now, their worth forgotten, faded, wrinkled, and grown thin.

Newer patterns I'd be wearing,
Strange, exotic in design;
Brighter lights I'd gaze at, flaring
Where sweet-scented flowers entwine,
Rather than be ever watching burned-out candles at a shrine.

But the flaring lights burned faintly
When I tried to catch their gleam,
And my garment, fashioned quaintly,
With a charm in every seam,
Would not let me fold it round me, but grew shadowy as a dream.

So I saw I must put color
In the faded dress I wore,
Found the candles were no duller
Than they had been oft before,
Tried to fill my eyes with stardust gathered out of fairy lore.

Since the places were unchanging,
I must vary then the hour,
Find new beauty in estranging
Time and place, within my power,
As by magic one might pluck in dead of winter some June flower.

So I wandered in my garden
When the snow lay on the ground,
Saw the icy surface harden
To a dazzling crust that crowned
All the sleeping plants still waiting like myself for spring's first sound.

And one night before the morning
Dawned, I climbed the attic stair,
Heard the dark's half-whispered warning
Not to brave its ghostly lair,
Felt strange shapes close in around me, with damp breaths of dismal air.

Then the week-day sunlight stealing
Through stained glass on empty pews,
Finds me solitary, kneeling;
While the Sunday rest I choose
To spend wandering through some workshop ere the weekly roar renews.

Thus I put the needed color
In the faded dress I wore;
Saw the candles were no duller
Than they had been oft before,
Filled my eyes with magic stardust found behind a
half-closed door.

From the city street we watched the sky,
Between tall buildings a strip, dark-blue,
With the stars behind it shining through
  Like watchfires on high.

"The stars make me feel so small," I cried,
"Like a traveller lost in a country strange;
Beneath their eyes that never change,
  I have lost all pride."

But he said, "They are signals that never set,
They always guide if we could but see.
For me they spell my immortality,
  Gold framed in jet."

GOD'S ANSWER

I cried aloud in my despair,
"Why must she go from me?
God knows they cannot need her there
As I do, ceaselessly."

God answered, "Like the morning lark,
Her soul brought radiant dawn.
We did not know it could be dark
In heaven, till she was gone.

I called her home. New beauty lies
Now in this sacred place.
Your love reflected in her eyes
Has glorified her face."

TREASURES

I have a chest of cedar filled with ghosts,
The ghosts of plays once seen, of music heard,
Of all the wisdom that a classroom boasts,
Of all the wealth stored in a lost friend's word.
I see them sometimes through a mist half-blurred,
But if, by chance, you looked at them with me,
Nothing but dusty papers would you see.

WISHES

"There are three desires in my heart," I said.
"Only three?"
"The first is to follow the sunset red,
As it brightens each land from its crimson bed,
And each sea.

And then I would be like a singing lark
In the sky,
To rouse men out of the slumbrous dark;
Like a flaming arrow to leave a mark
On high."

"And what other wish would you add to these two
In your pride?"
"Ah! never from me will you gain the third clue,
Lest you see me so humble, that swiftly from you
I must hide."

THE BLUE HOLE

A magic pool,
Within a ring of trees it lay.
Its mossy sides sloped downward to the cool
Unbottomed center, bluish-green,
Like some huge crater sunk between
Two shadowy walls, where sunbeams never stray.
But as I lean
Far o'er the edge like any fool,
An elfin face returns my stare;
I find my pool to be a fairy lair.

THE SUNDIAL

In this deserted garden plot I stand,
Half over-grown with clinging vines that screen
Me from my lord the sun, whose face no more
With bright and burning gaze looks into mine.
In my poor ignorance once I thought myself
A very chanticleer, without whose aid
No sunshine e'er could find its way to earth.
Then I was young, and in my strong youth's pride,
Boasted, "I number none but sunny hours."
Ah well, I keep my word! for since the hours
Beneath these shading trees have lost the sun,
I cease to count them, and they slip away
Like pale, gray ghosts into eternity.

'Twas only from the birds that seek this shade,
I learned the sun still shines, though not on me;
He has forgot the many days I served him well.
Those "sunny hours!" The garden then was trim,
With straight-cut borders, and the flowers bloomed
For very love of her who tended them.
Even now at twilight when the soft winds blow,
I hear her flitting by me, feel her hands
Caressingly pass o'er my upturned face,
To trace the words she used to love so well.

She too knew none but cloudless hours
In that far happy time, and then like mine,
Her life too lost the sun. So now she haunts
This place of former joys. A silent pair
We wait together, she and I, until
The shadows fade before the sun's bright touch,
And we can count the "sunny hours" again.

SONGS

I sang out in the woods today
  All the songs in my heart,
But only the birds could hear, and they
  Waited for me to depart.

In the city tonight where I long to please
  All who care for the music I bring,
I find—the pity of it!—for these
  I have no songs to sing.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

I will make a web of my disappointments,
Weaving their faded strands
Into a dull, monotonous pattern.
When I spread it on the grass at my feet
It will look lifeless,
But when I lift it before my eyes,
Shining through it
I will see the light of hope,
As a moonbeam struggling
Through filmy cobwebs.

HOLLYHOCKS

My window overlooks a wilderness of hollyhocks,
Their gayly colored bells,
Wine red, shell-pink, or rose,
Swaying with each passing breeze.
Almost I hear the chimes they ring,
But they are only meant for fairy ears and bees.
I long to take canvas and brush
And thus make them last forever,
But my only canvas is this paper,
And the only paint I can use is words,
And I have lost my palette.
Who can mix words,
So that the color of my hollyhocks
Will live upon this page,
And never fade?

TO MY DOG

Let's pretend
That I'm a portrait painter,
Very famous, with my studio
Lined with lovely faces,
Painted ghosts that watch me as I work.
But I am sitting idle, dreaming,
Waiting for another face to draw,
And then you come in sombre black,
Together with the cat in flaming yellow.
With the artist's love of contrasts,
I exclaim, "Here is my subject.
I will paint you both together,
The golden sun and its darkened shadow."

The sun I find an easy model,
For she seats herself serenely,
With faintly supercilious air,
A rather bored and blasé beauty.
But you, her shadow,
How can I paint you,
When you jump in my lap,
And lick my face and hands
To show how much you love me?

Let's not pretend I am a painter any more.
We'll go outside and have a game of ball,
And leave the self-sufficient cat behind.

SYMBOLS

A spray of crimson tulips
  In a carved jade bowl,
Lay on a shelf, reflected
  Within a girandole.

The warm glow of the flowers,
  The coolness of the jade,
Upon the crystal surface
  Two pools of color made.

I drank their cup of beauty,
  Yet barely touched its brim,
Unhelped I missed the depths
  Hid in that goblet dim.

For where I saw a mirror,
  There shone forth family pride;
And that cool bowl of green,
  For which a man had died,

Spelt fame in burning letters—
  A priceless vase, to hold
Symbols of greater worth,
  Of friendship tried and old.

THE RAINBOW

At the end of the rainbow descending
  Deep into the crystalline ocean,
  Slowly rocked by the sea's lazy motion,
A fairy sits spinning all day.
  The bow's radiant colors she seizes
  And weaves into strands, which the breezes
Waft over the world, gayly blending
Their hues with the earth's duller gray.

The red 'neath her deft fingers springing
  Leaps to life from the coal on the ashes,
  In the ruby with passion it flashes,
Comes to rest in the rose's deep heart.
  And the violet thread, darkened, enriches
  The royal-hued iris, bewitches
The throat of the hummingbird winging
His flight like a shimmering dart.

O'er the soft blades of grass, the green streaming
  From the hand of the prodigal fairy,
  Weaves a carpet of color, to carry
The weight of the world's weary feet.
  The sea-foam that splashes and shivers,
  The wind-blown ivy that quivers,
The emerald's sheen—all are teeming,
With the color of springtime replete.

The blue that the winds widely scatter
  Bathes the waves of the sea as it surges
  Towards the high-arching heavens, then merges
Itself in the depths of the skies.
  While the threads that are woven of yellow
  Gild the rising sun's rays warm and mellow,
Or hide in the rocks, till men shatter
The vein where their rough beauty lies.

At the end of the day very slowly
  All the colors are blended together
  Into white, like a snowy swan's feather;
All melt in a silvery mist
  Like the dew when it lovingly showers
  The slumberous forms of the flowers.
And the fairy herself, pure and holy,
By myriad moonbeams is kissed.

EYES

"If we could borrow other's eyes,"
I mused in moral tone, "what lies
Beneath the broidered surface fair
Might give us pause, or else some rare,
Deep-water pearl to sunlight brought
Might show us wealth beyond our thought."
As one for whom God did unroll
The secret mysteries of the soul,
I talked. My friend kept silent pace
Beside me, with immobile face.

"That man we passed," I chattered on,
Saving my speech till he had gone,
"To see him smile you would not know
His heart was full of dead men's woe,
That holds him tortured, without rest."
"He does but show the world his best;
You should not rob him," said my friend.
Abashed I hastened to amend
My speech and vision. "There's a girl
Across the way, who in the whirl
Of pleasure strives to be most bold,
Flaunting her youth before the old.
Yet I have found it but a dress
To cover her tense loneliness.
Why must men be so cruelly blind?"

"You cast your questions down the wind,
And idle questions idly roam,"
My friend replied, "but in your home
With my poor eyes I see a saint,
One that a master-hand should paint.
Vision like yours so keen and clear,
Is blinded when the light shines near."

A MEMORY OF THE WAR

I watched the children playing yesterday,
And heard their eager voices, vibrant, gay.
My thoughts turned toward the little ones of France,
Who must be taught to smile, to play, to dance.

And when the happy children's games were done,
I saw them fasten hands and homeward run.
The picture of a ruined street flashed clear,
Marked with a cross, "My father's house stood here."

Men needs must bear the war's cruel, grinding cost,
Still they at least once had the thing they lost.
But children, old from fear!—what sight more sad!—
For they have lost the things they never had.

DREAMS

Characters: BARBARA, AGATHA, GERTRUDE.

AGATHA

Ah! Barbara, my child, why do you weep?
Your eyes that look so strained from many tears
Have not been used to mirror all your moods
So plainly.

BARBARA

You have given the reason there.
In all my life I've known but passing moods,
And it was rather fun to fool the world;
You've never been quite sure, although I laughed,
How gay or sad my heart was. Now I've found
That I can play no more. This is no mood,
To pass away as others have. I've lost—

AGATHA

What have you lost?

BARBARA

A dream.

AGATHA

'Tis better so.

BARBARA

Better? You know not what you say. My dream
Was all my life. It seems I should be dead
Now it has gone, but I am only cold.
It's strange I cannot laugh.

GERTRUDE

What was your dream?

BARBARA

The vision of a perfect knight.

GERTRUDE

Poor child!

BARBARA

Of one who had no fear in all the world
Save only that of ever losing me.
It was no idle dream. I could have sworn
If you had asked me only yesterday,
That I had truly found him. He seemed all
My heart had longed for—till he ran away.
Oh! not from me! I think he lacked that force.
He fled from fighting in a losing cause,
Because, he said, he wished to save his strength
For better things, and this lost fight was none
Of his own choosing. Who elects to lose?
But I had rather watch my ship go down,
Knowing her safety lies within my care,
Than sail away to some bright tropic isle
Where "better things" await me, leaving her
Alone to beat her life out 'gainst the waves.
Some wind might bring her safe to port. Who knows?
Lost causes are not always lost, but dreams
Once broken never find their wings again.

GERTRUDE

They seem like fragile butterflies, my child,
But I have found that dreams have eagles' wings,
That bear you soaring to the heights of heaven.
If you have dreams you live on mountain peaks.
I lived there once, and then I clambered down
By slow degrees till now the level plain
Has swallowed up my life. If you have lost
One peak, fly on to other heights. Your wings
Are only bruised, not broken. Fly again.
The air on eagles' wings is better far
Than slothful valley ease.

BARBARA

The air is cold.

GERTRUDE

Not colder than a burned out fire.

AGATHA

My child,
She counsels most unwisely. All too well
I know how cold the heights are and how lonely.
When I was young I dreamed (who does not dream?)
As you have done, and I preferred to soar
High overhead, to wander at my will
Free from all petty cares. I made my choice
And I have lived my life above the clouds.

The air is clear and sight is doubly keen,
But I know now the valley fire is better.
Not broken wings alone can make one fall;
Wings can grow tired for lack of place to rest.
Besides, your dream was of a perfect knight,
You say, who played you false. He may perhaps
Through trusting in your faith, think that of you.
You also may be but a faded dream.
You spoke so bravely just a moment since
Of standing for lost causes. Why not be
The champion of lost dreams?

BARBARA

My dream is dead.

AGATHA

If it were dead it would not hurt you so.

BARBARA

You think it is alive? Don't torture me
With hopes that are not true.—His dream of me,
I had not thought of that—is it quite dead?
If I should try to give it wings again
It might teach mine to fly. What do you think?
Two dreams together would not fear the cold.
Besides I would not fly so high again.
I'll go to tell him now.

GERTRUDE

[*To Agatha.*]

What have you done?
You're proud of having tamed an eagle's wings?

AGATHA

I'm glad of having warmed them at the fire.

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